

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐
no ☐

Property Name: Altamont Seventeen Mile Grade and Altamont Interlocking Tower Inventory Number: G-IV-B-175 and G-IV-B-118
 Address: Piedmont, WVA, to Altamont, MD.
Accessed by Altamont Tower Road City: Altamont Zip Code: N/A
 County: Garrett USGS Topographic Map: Deer Park, Kitzmuller, Barton, Westernport, and others
 Owner: CSX Transportation Is the property being evaluated a district? ☐ yes
 Tax Parcel Number: N/A Tax Map Number: N/A Tax Account ID Number: N/A
 Project: Assess Visual Effects of Allegheny Heights Windpower Facility Agency: _____
 Site visit by MHT Staff: ☒ no ☐ yes Name: _____ Date: _____
 Is the property located within a historic district? ☐ yes ☒ no

If the property is within a district

District Inventory Number: _____

NR-listed district ☐ yes Eligible district ☐ yes District Name: _____

Preparer's Recommendation: Contributing resource ☐ yes ☐ no Non-contributing but eligible in another context ☐

If the property is not within a district (or the property is a district)

Preparer's Recommendation: Eligible ☒ yes ☐ no

Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☒ None

Documentation on the property/district is presented in:

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: *(Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)*

The Altamont Seventeen Mile Grade (MIHP # G-IV-B-175) and the Altamont Interlocking Tower (MIHP # G-IV-B-118) are two components associated with the same resource. The Altamont Seventeen Mile Grade is a 17-mile section of railroad track that was constructed between Piedmont, WVA, and Altamont, MD. The railroad was part of the extension of the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad main line west of Cumberland, MD, to Wheeling, WVA. The grade is mapped correctly in the MHT GIS.

The route was surveyed beginning in 1847. After leaving Cumberland, the railroad followed the Potomac River to Westernport, Maryland. The road crossed into Garrett County west of Piedmont, WVA, and began a long ascent up Backbone Mountain by following the Savage River valley that passes between the Big Savage Mountain and Backbone Mountain. The railroad then turned southeast along the west side of Backbone Mountain following Crabtree Creek, reaching the summit of the Allegheny Mountains at Altamont at an altitude of 2,628 feet. This is the highest point of the railroad in Western Maryland. The length of the railroad track is seventeen miles with an ascent of 116 feet per mile, a ruling grade of 2.2 per cent. Though the grade was steeper than originally surveyed,

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended ☐

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ None

Comments: _____

Andrew Lewis
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

4/7/05
Date

John E. Canty
Reviewer, NR Program

4/7/05
Date

200500684

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
NR-ELIBILITY REVIEW FORM**

Continuation Sheet No. 1

G-IV-B-175

the technology of the locomotives was able to handle the ascent. The ascent of 116 feet per mile was adopted as the not-to-exceed standard for the transcontinental railroads constructed later over the Rocky Mountains. The railroad over Backbone Mountain was constructed during 1850-1851. Five thousand men and twelve hundred horses were employed to grade the B&O line. The earth was drilled by hand or blasted by explosive powder. Horse-drawn carts were used to remove the stone and soil. A single track was originally constructed over the line. The first passenger train completed the ascent over Backbone Mountain in July 1851 (Dilts 1993:333, 342, 366; Schlosnagle 1978:198-203).

In 1872, a second track was laid along the Altamont 17-mile grade and double tracking was continued to Oakland in 1873 (Weeks 1949:34). The Altamont Interlocking Tower (MIHP # G-IV-B-118) was constructed ca. 1875 to house the mechanisms that controlled the switches for the multiple tracking. The two-story, two-bay by two-bay, wood-frame building is clad with aluminum siding. The hipped roof is sheathed with composition roll. The windows and primary access are located on the second story, which overlooks the railroad tracks. The primary doorway occupies the east elevation and is accessed by an exterior metal stairway. The windows are single and paired one-over-one-light, double-hung sash units. A secondary doorway into the first story is located on the west elevation. The tower was removed from service in the 1990s.

The construction of the railroad through this section of Garrett County spurred the subsequent settlement and development of the area. The railroad supported local lumbering and coal mining industries. New towns were established along the railroad line, including Altamont, Swanton, Deer Park, Loch Lynn, and Oakland.

The Altamont Seventeen-Mile Grade was an engineering feat of its day, along with several structures, primarily bridges, and grades that were constructed for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. This section of the railroad is significant for its qualities of engineering applying National Register Criteria C. Although this section of tracking has been continually upgraded throughout its history, the grading and approximate location of the line remain the same as constructed in 1850-1851. The Altamont Interlocking Tower was a support structure constructed ca. 1875 to house the switches to control the tracking at the western end of the grade and contributes information illustrating the evolution of the railroad track along the grade.

References

Dilts, James D.
1993 *The Great Road*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Maryland Historical Trust
1981 MIHP Forms G-IV-B-175 and G-IV-B-118. On file at the MHT Library, Crownsville, MD.

Schlosnagle, Stephen
1978 *Garrett County: A History of Maryland's Tableland*. Reprinted 1997. McClain Printing Company, Parsons, West Virginia.

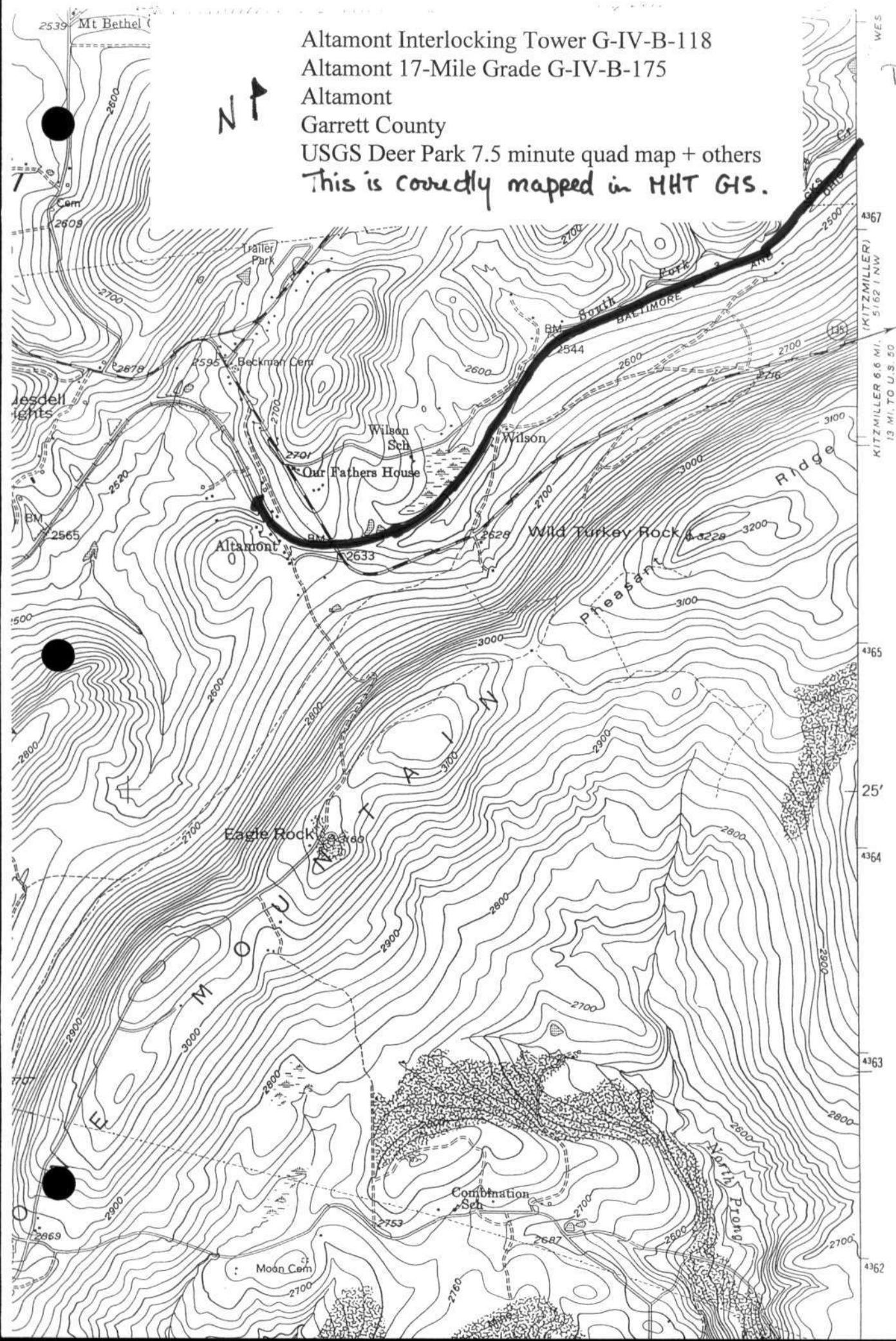
Weeks, Thekla Fundenberg
1949 *Oakland, Garrett County*. Published by the Oakland Centennial Commission, Inc. Sincell Printing Company, Oakland, MD.

Prepared by: Katherine Grandine, M.A., R.
Christopher Goodwin &
Associates, Inc.

Date Prepared: January 2005

Altamont Interlocking Tower G-IV-B-118
 Altamont 17-Mile Grade G-IV-B-175
 Altamont
 Garrett County
 USGS Deer Park 7.5 minute quad map + others
This is correctly mapped in MHT GIS.

*Duck Pond
 1918;
 1981*





MHP # -9-14-13-175

ALTAMONT SEVENTEEN MILE GRADE

GARRETT COUNTY, MARYLAND

RCGA

JANUARY 2005

MD SUPD

ALTAMONT SEVENTEEN MILE GRADE, VIEW NE

1 OF 1

G-IV-B-175

Altamont Seventeen-Mile Grade
Bloomington/Altamont
Private

1851-1852

The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Seventeen-Mile Grade is a 17 mile section of the B & O Railroad track extending from Piedmont, WV to Altamont, Md., a rise of 1626 feet per mile, and in some places it reaches 116 feet per mile.

The construction of the Seventeen-mile grade was an extraordinary engineering accomplishment in its day.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

G-IV-B-175

MAGI-1211295519

G

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Altamont Seventeen-Mile Grade

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

B & O Railroad tracks from Piedmont, WV to Altamont, MD

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Bloomington/Altamont

☒ VICINITY OF

6th

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

Garrett County

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☒ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☒ TRANSPORTATION
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

CSX Corp. - Chessie Railroad

Telephone #:

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

☐ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #:

Folio #:

Garrett County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Third and Alder Streets

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

Maryland 21550

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

G-IV-B-175

CONDITION☐ EXCELLENT☒ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE**☐ UNALTERED☒ ALTERED**CHECK ONE**☒ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Seventeen-Mile Grade is a 17 mile section of The B & O Railroad track extending from Piedmont, WV to Altamont, MD., a rise of 1,626 feet per mile, and in some places it reaches 116 feet per mile.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

8 SIGNIFICANCE

G-IV-B-175

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1851-52

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The construction of the Seventeen-mile grade was an extraordinary engineering accomplishment in its day. In the late 1840's, several engineers under the direction of Benjamin H. Latrobe, chief engineer of the B & O, selected and designed a route across the mountainous region of Maryland and West Virginia with grades within the limits of the power of the locomotive. (Reizenstein pp. 337-38). This particular grade became the standard maximum grade for railroad construction (Schosnagle, p. 16).

It was constructed between 1851-1852, shortly after Thomas Swann was elected President of the B & O Railroad. He was well-known for his interest in the expeditious completion of the line between Cumberland and Wheeling. At the time of the seventeen-mile grade construction, the B & O Railroad was the longest railroad in America. (Reizenstein, p. 336).

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Reizenstein, Milton. The Economic History of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad 1827-1853. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1897.

Schlosnagle, Stephen. Garrett County - A History of Maryland's Tableland. Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1978.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Donna Ware, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Maryland Historical Trust/Bureau of Mines

DATE

9-10-81

STREET & NUMBER

Shaw House, 21 State Circle

TELEPHONE

(301) 269-2438

CITY OR TOWN

Annapolis

STATE

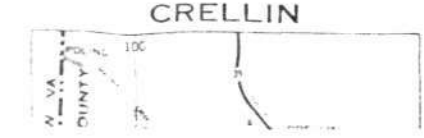
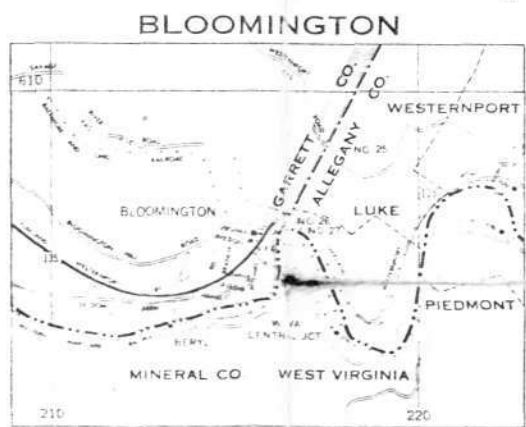
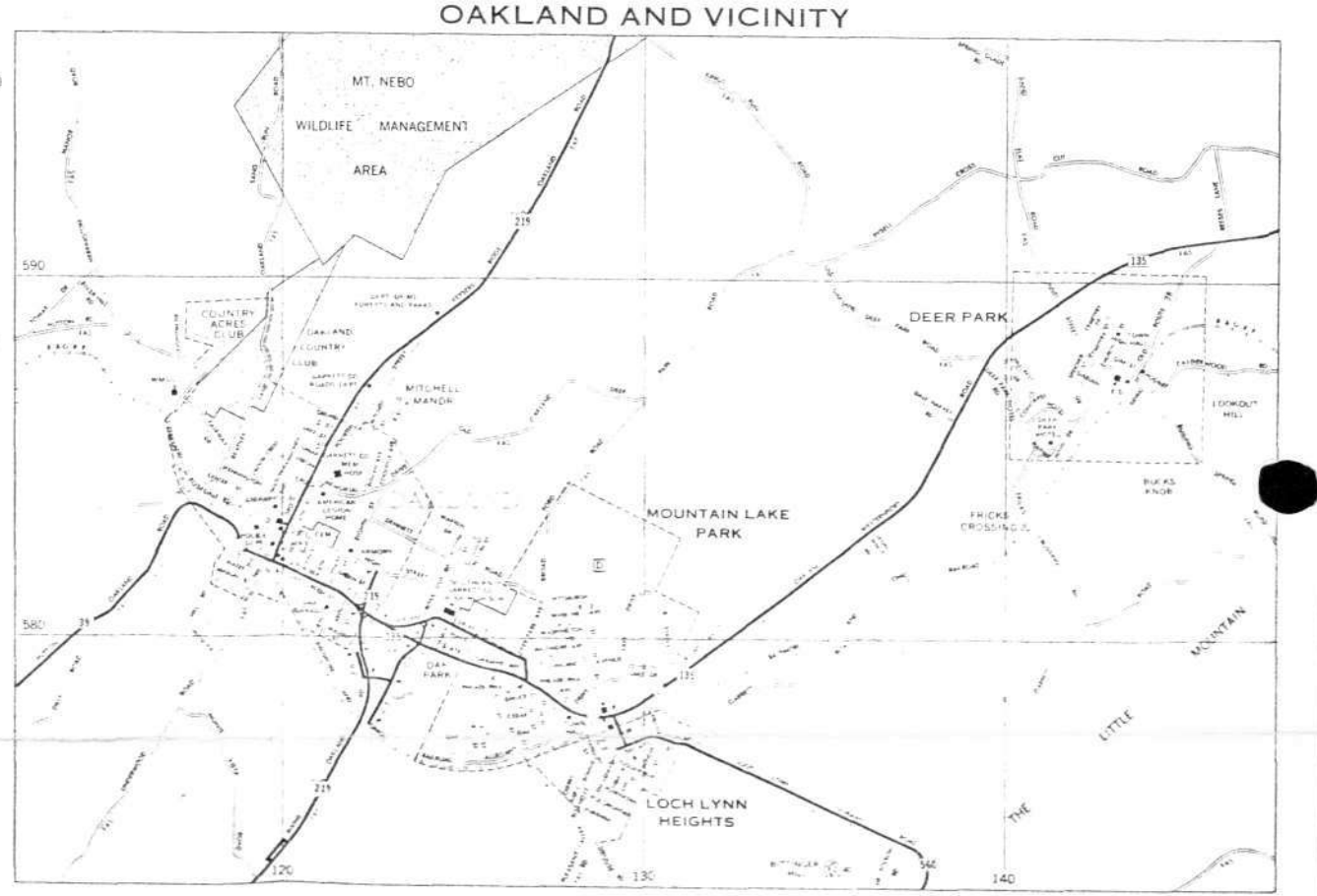
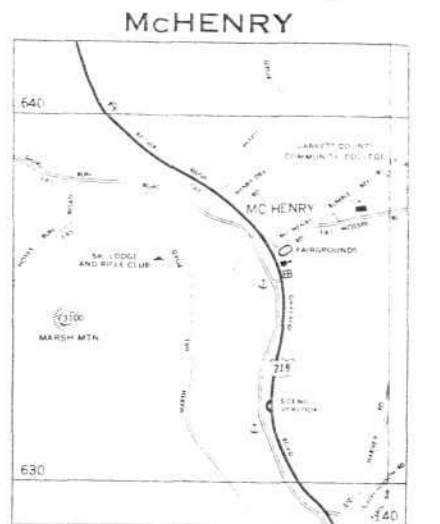
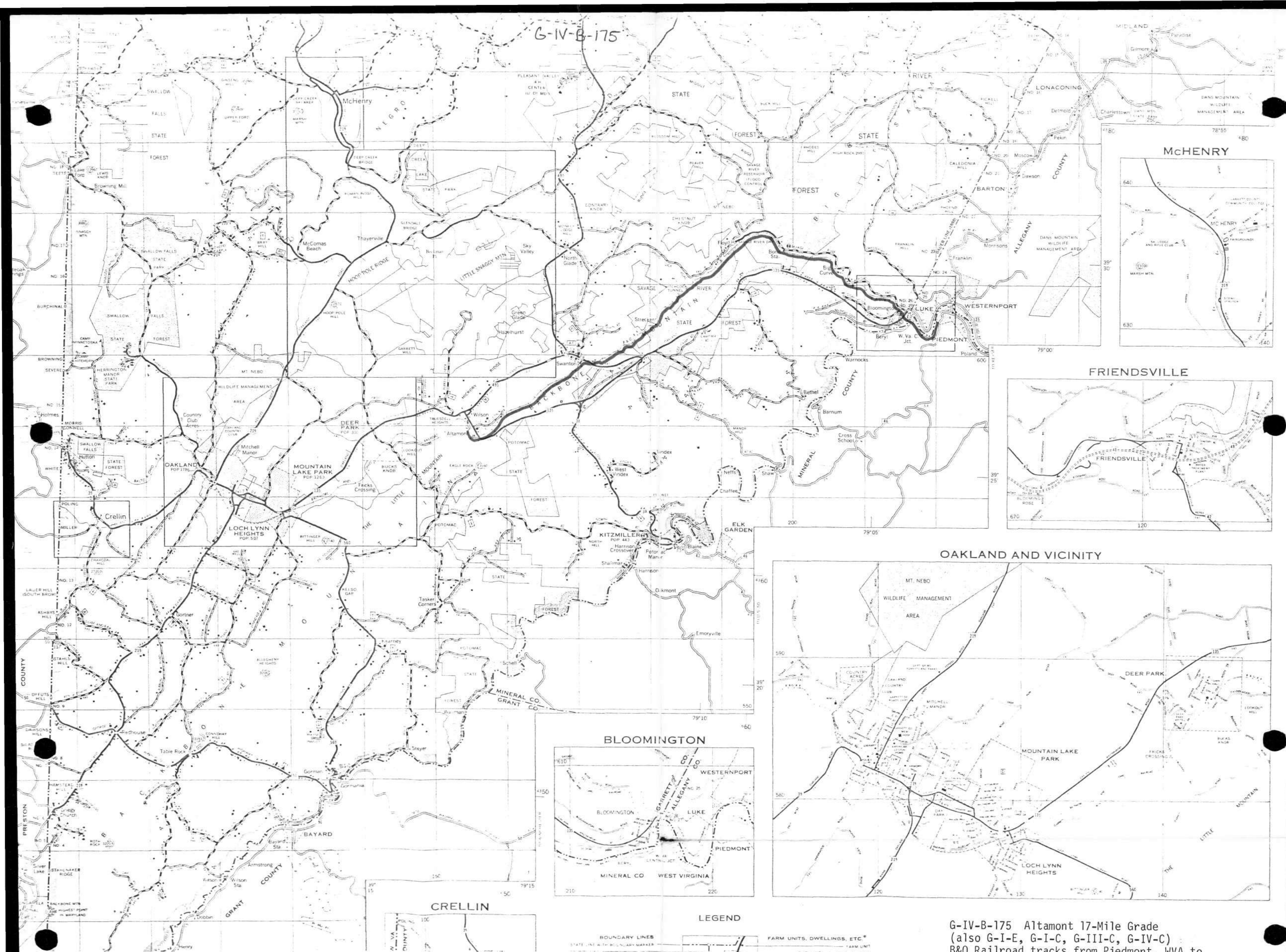
Maryland 21401

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

G-IV-B-175



G-IV-B-175 Altamont 17-Mile Grade
(also G-I-E, G-I-C, G-III-C, G-IV-C)
B&O Railroad tracks from Piedmont, WVA to
Altamont, Md.